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### Special Quid Novi Issue

Emmanuel Castiel, BCL III Editor-in-chief, Rédacteur en chef

Happy new year and welcome back! While our minds might still be somewhere on vacation or in Quebec City with the Law Gamers, we got to face the real world: it's time to get a job! So this being January, and the time to send applications to law firms for stages and summer jobs, the Quid Novi has prepared a special issue on the application process.

For your information, the Quid Novi has put together articles written by people in the know: there are articles written by Assistant Dean Geller and by the students who organized Placement Day, as well as students in charge of the placement office and of the Law Link.

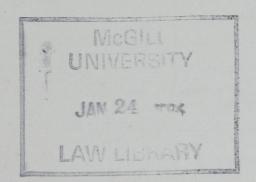
Comme d'habitude, il y a aussi des articles d'opinion, qui sont assez critiques de l'institution des stages.

Dans les prochains numéros du Quid, il sera sujet, entre autres, de l'école du Barreau.

J'aimerai remercier les personnes qui ont travaillées avec achamement pour produire ce journal: Angela Hui, Jake Avayou, Danny Weinberger, Dave Lisbona et Robin Geller.

Bonne Lecture!!

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## Announcements / Annonces

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Notes from the Office of Undergraduate Studies

The EXAMINATION for LAW OF PERSONS has been rescheduled from Tuesday 30th April to Tuesday 23rd April, 2:30 p.m. If you are enrolled in this course and, as a consequence, find you are scheduled to write four examinations in four days, including the Law of Persons examination, please see Christine Gervais.

A revised examination schedule is available from the OUS.

You are reminded that December examinations may be reviewed during the two week period following the January 18th Marks Meeting. Examinations

written for sessional lecturers are generally available from the OUS and examinations written for Faculty are with the professors.

Critical Approaches to Private Law Annie Macdonald Langstaff Workshop Wednesday, January 24th, 12:30, Moot Court

The Annie Macdonald Langstaff Workshop Series has organized a panel discussion on private law as its first event of the semester. We've invited three researchers to talk about the work they are currently doing in different areas of private law.



Steven Leitman, BCL II

Steve's Top Ten Interview
Tips:

- 10. Don't quote (Justice?) Jean Bienvenue.
- 9. Avoid immitating Beavis and Butthead (unless the interviewer says the word "butt". Huh huh huh, I said "butt").
- 8. You'd best not floss at the interview unless you bring enough for everyone.
- 7. Do not mention how you were a good litigator in a previous life.
- 6. Try not to burp, but if you must, at least belch the word "law".
- 5. Make sure all your zippers are done up.
- 4. If they take you to dinner, don't complain that the wine is too fruity.
- 3. Never, never, never give the interviewer a noogie.
- 2. Start off by pledging your soul to the firm they're going to take it anyway.
- 1. One word: Bribe.

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Angela Hui, Anna Kapellas, Kiri Vanikiotis Jake Avayou, Dave Lisbona, Danny Weinberger



# LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING WITH YOU IN MARCH!

#### APPLICATION PROCEDURE

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EACH APPLICATION MUST INCLUDE A CURRICULUM VITAE AND SUMMARY OF ALL AVAILABLE UNIVERSITY RESULTS. APPLICATIONS WILL BE REVIEWED BY THE MEMBERS OF OUR STUDENTS AND STAGIAIRES COMMITTEE AND A DECISION WILL THEN BE MADE AS TO WHETHER THE APPLICANT IS INVITED TO THE FIRM FOR AN INTERVIEW. WE UNDERTAKE TO ADVISE EACH APPLICANT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF OUR DECISION WITH REGARD TO HIS OR HER APPLICATION.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON OUR STUDENTS AND STAGIAIRES PROGRAM,

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STUDENTS AND STAGIAIRES

COMMITTEE, MR. PIERRE HÉBERT.

### Assistant Dean Talks

#### Robin Geller, Assistant Dean, Admissions, Placement and Alumni Relations

When I last wrote an article for the *Quid Novi*, I had only recently joined the Faculty of Law. At that time, I was looking forward to overseeing the First Annual Placement Day and Careers Day. Those two events are now behind us, and I am pleased to report that both ran smoothly and have been well received. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Careers Day Committee, the Placement Day Committee, the Placement Officer, Barbara Kerr and my assistant, Heather McCombie for their tremendous effort in making these events so successful.

Student participation on both days was quite strong and almost 80 law firms, government bodies and other organizations were present for Careers Day. All of the representatives at Careers Day that I spoke with emphasized their strong continuing interest in attracting McGill law graduates to their workplaces. I am also eager to receive your feedback on these two events and will be circulating a questionnaire by e-mail to elicit your

#### comments.

In the three months since my last article in the Quid I have had the opportunity to get to know many students. I know that many of you, in all years, are taking active steps to become better informed about your professional futures. I hope that the presentations during Placement Day and your conversations with employers during Careers Day have been of assistance in that regard by exposing you to the wide variety of careers that are available to those with a background in law.

A degree in law - or better yet, the two degrees in law that are received by graduates of the National Programme - can lead to many different career paths. Some of those paths, such as working in small, mid-size or large law firms, working in government or as in-house counsel, involve the active practise of law.

However, training in law also allows students to develop skills that are very useful and highly valued in other fields. The analytical capabilities of law graduates, their ability to synthesize material quickly and accurately as well as their skills in presenting information effectively, both orally and in written form, are extremely attractive to a wide variety of non-legal employers. Many of you may discover that you prefer to pursue a path that does not involve the active practise of law.

In deciding which path best meets your interests and skills, I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities available and the services offered at the Faculty of Law. Those interested in being "a lawyer for a day", should consider participating in the Shadow Program (Stéphanie Marin can provide you further details). Also, as many of you know, the materials in the Placement Office offer a comprehensive source of up-to-date information about summer and articling positions, as well as bar admission course requirements in various jurisdictions. In February, the Placement Office will be offering a Mock Interview Program to assist students in preparing for their meetings with employers. A sign-up sheet for those interested in participating will be posted in the Placement Office.

I am also available to speak with students with particular questions about their career aspirations. For any of you who are interested in doing so, I would be happy to meet with you to discuss your plans for the future.

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## Resume Writing and Interview Skills

The next three articles are ssummaries of the panels held on Placement Day, January 11. Clare Mauro sums up the panels on resume writing and interviews while Laura Fish and Amee Sandhu, respectively, review the panels on alternative legal practices and on the direction the law is taking.

#### Clare Mauro, LLB I

The all-important question of how to get that elusive position in a firm or with a government agency or department seems to be of concern to a great many students if the turn-out for the Placement Day panels on "Resumé Writing and Interview Skills" and "The Articling Experience" was any indication.

Both panels addressed issues which affect employers when making those crucial hiring decisions each year.

Some key points stressed by the panellists are as follows:

#### The Cover Letter

The best approach is to keep it simple. The most effective cover letters are those that are short, clear and concise. Proper paper should be used (i.e. letter size, preferably white - avoid those fashion colours!) and one should ensure that there are NO SPELLING MISTAKES! Pay special attention to the name of the firm and the contact personaccording to Me. Robert Metcalfe, a McGill alumnus in charge of reviewing curriculum vitae at McCarthy Tétrault, nothing puts an application in the rejection pile faster than this type of careless

The letter should contain your return address and a current phone number. Do not give your parents' phone number unless you are certain that that is where you can be reached during early to mid-February when interviews are being arranged. Law firms are busy and they don't have the time to track you down!

Finally, in terms of content, all panellists stress that originality and freshness are things that draw them to an application. A firm really will not take too much time looking at a resumé if the cover letter does not entice them. Remember that there are usually two hundred other applications on the desk and that you can easily be passed over if your letter does not stand out. Key things to emphasize are enthusiasm, interest and willingness to work hard. Writing a firm to tell them that it has been your dream to work there might not be as effective as stating that there is a particular reason why you are interested in working there, for example because the firm practices a certain type of law that has interested you. If you are going to go with the former approach, make sure that you are featuring Me. Metcalfe told an the right firm. amusing/frightening story of receiving a cover letter at McCarthy stating that it had been this person's lifelong ambition of working at Stikeman Elliot OUCH!

If you have a particular connection to the firm it should be mentioned in the cover letter. If you know or have spoken to someone who works there or one of their clients state this. This helps the firm to identify you. This does not necessarily mean that you should exploit patronage to get a job, but firms do require this information because it would not do for them to alienate a client or partner by not granting an interview. An effective way of doing this without appearing pompous is to indicate your connection to this person by stating that you have spoken to them and that they have given you a positive impression of the firm and also by CC-ing them in your letter. It might also help to have them contact the hiring committee so that the firm is aware that this is something that should be taken into consideration.

In short, firms encourage students to be creative and original-but within reason. You should not deviate too far from an accepted business format.

#### The Resumé

Once again, basic ideas were emphasized and there were no surprises. A resumé should follow an accepted business format. If you are in doubt about what style is acceptable, the panellists recommend that you consult a guide to resumé writing. There are several books on reserve in the library-consult the Placement Office door for call numbers. Whatever style you choose, avoid long sentences or phrases. Use point form!

In terms of content, it is essential to highlight unique qualities and experiences so that you come across to the hiring committee as interesting and vibrant. It is not essential to have a ton of legal experience. If you don't have any, that's fine as long as you adapt your particular experiences to the employer. In fact, you are not expected to have any relevant experience in the legal profession, especially if you are a first or second year student.

It was also indicated that it is better to include your references along with your C.V. This saves them the step of contacting you to obtain your references. Also, references should be contacted by you in advance to warn them that there is a possibility that a firm may be contacting them. Make sure that your references are going to say positive things about you!

#### The Interview

Key things that were stressed were flexibility and punctuality. Interviews for summer and articling positions are usually held within a certain period. Firms stress that you be as accommodating as possible. They have a lot of interviews to schedule and cannot chase you down.

You should arrive early for your interview so that the interview time-frame can be accommodated as much as possible. Bring a book to keep occupied. One thing that you may not realize is that the receptionists are taking notes about you while you are in the waiting area. That is why it is crucial to be polite and friendly to the staff. It also does not hurt to be cordial to the other interviewees in the waiting area.

The panellists stressed that a smile and a firm handshake are important because they communicate confidence. However, it is important not to crush the fingers of the hiring panel. If in doubt, practice on your friends.

Dress should be conservative and professional. Men should wear a jacket and tie, but suits are not essential. Women should wear a skirt and blouse, but again a power suit is not necessary. Fashion is not important; good grooming is. It is more important to appear neat than to impress them with the latest from Donna Karan or Armani. However, certain fashion faux-pas should be avoided. Men should wear proper dress socks, not tube socks or hockey socks. Women were told that long flowery skirts and sandals look lovely on the beach but are not suitable interview attire. It goes without saying that spikey hair, exposed tattoos and creative body piercing is not encouraged. You nonconformists out there will have to find another profession or start your own firm.

In terms of content, you should be prepared to talk about law, current events, and issues. The answer is not as important as the method of answering. You should be focused and concise and you are encouraged to have an opinion. You should also come across as organized, dynamic and interested. It is particularly impressive to a firm (and this is especially true for those students applying for an articling position) if you are familiar with cases argued by lawyers with their firm, or at best you are familiar with decisions in a particular area of law that the firm practices.

You are also encouraged to ask questions.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Robert Vineberg, Partner at Goodman Phillips & Vineberg, said that he learns more about an applicant from the questions they ask than from their responses. However, it is important to reserve questions for the appropriate time; it is very bad protocol to interrupt an interviewer when she/he is asking a question.

Above all, creativity and individuality were emphasized—not in dress, but in attitude.

#### The Articling Experience

The panellists offered a variety of perspectives on the articling experience:

Janice Gross at Heenan Blaikie said that articling is not terrible, but it is important to remember that it is a different experience for everyone. She said that she liked working in a large firm because of the opportunity to do a variety of work and to meet different people.

François Giroux from Spiegel Sohmer said that doing his articles at a smaller firm worked to his advantage for hire-back purposes. He felt that there was less competition and more of an opportunity to gain recognition within the firm. He also recommended that a summer position with a firm is an excellent way of getting one's foot in the door.

Geneviève Saumier, clerk for the Hon. Mr. Justice John Sopinka dispelled the myth that all people who clerk go on to become academics. She said that a quite a few people who clerk go on to

find employment in private practice. She likes the intellectual stimulation of working with 27 other people who are bright and interested in the law. However, the experience varies depending on whom you are clerking for.

Finally, Robert Vineberg stressed the importance of picking a firm that suits your personality. The corporate culture is very important in choosing your articling position. He also said that it is better to apply to a small number of firms than to over-extend yourself.

Hopefully, this demystifies the articling experience and job search techniques for those who are about to take the plunge and send out

those resumés. Good luck, and remember to check out the Placement Office if you have any questions or concerns!

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### Alternative Legal Practices

Laura Fish, LLB III

Twenty years ago most law school graduates wanted to practice law. That is to say that they at least intended to use their legal education to work in a law firm -- whether that meant setting up shop with one or two friends or seeking employment in an already established firm. Today many people look at law school as basic training for any number of careers. It may even be argued that many law students would like to work in a field that is as far away from law as possible. Despite the change in attitude most law students and lawyers still view anything other than a mid-size or large corporate firm as an alternative legal practice.

Notwithstanding the increasing prominence of 'other' legal practices, most

people know little about how to find the alternative job they are seeking. It is for this reason that the FIRST EVER FACULTY OF LAW PLACEMENT DAY featured the Alternative Legal Practices panel. After a wonderful lunch sponsored by Tory, Tory, DesLauriers & Binnington, four lawyers who are currently working in non-traditional settings explained the joys of alternative legal practice to an audience of fifty five students. Each panelist offered a different perspective and talked about the benefits of their particular career path.

Monique Mercier, Assistant General Counsel Corporate at BCE Inc. (the parent company of Bell Canada and Bell Mobile, among others), explained that the years she spent working in the tax law department at Stikeman, Elliot in Montreal provided her opportunity to pursue a career as corporate counsel. In fact, Me Mercier explained that she became a part of the BCE team only after she represented them. Me Mercier stated that she enjoys working at an in-house legal department because of the opportunity to do a broad range of She also pointed out that as work. corporate counsel her involvement with a transaction continues through implementation stage. As well, Me Mercier noted that she does not have to spend time recruiting clients. According to Mercier, one of the downsides of working in the corporate setting is the pay cut -- few company lawyers make more than \$200,000.

(Continued from page 6)

Sophie Bourque, a criminal lawyer with the five person firm of Hébert & Bourque, began by telling the audience how she decided to practice at a small firm. Bourque explained the she went to law school in order to become a criminal defence lawyer. She stated that because she is allergic to authority, she knew that she wanted to be her own boss. Thus, instead of applying to already established firms, Me Bourque simply grabbed her teacher in the hall and asked him to go into practice with her. Bourque said that despite the lack of security, she enjoys working in a small firm. She also pointed out that she is the norm -- not the alternative.

John Holmes, a federal civil servant with the Department of External Affairs, was also enthusiastic about his career choice. Like Me Bourque, he went to law school with a specific career in mind. However, Mr. Holmes was quick to point out that the foreign service is not meant for those people who, like Bourque, are allergic to authority. As well, Holmes pointed out that the job is rewarding but

not lucrative. Despite this, there has been no shortage of travel during Holmes career: he spent four years at the Canadian High Commission in Barbados and two years at the High Commission in Ghana. He is now back in Ottawa as the head of Human Rights and Democratic Development External Affairs as a career for those students who are interested in working in the foreign service. explained that law is seen as a speciality similar to economics or linguistics; much of the work done by lawyers working for the federal government oversees is diplomacy. Mr. Holmes also mentioned unlike many other departments, the foreign service is hiring this year.

The fourth member of the Alternative Legal Practices panel, Ms. Joanne St. Lewis, may be described as a combination academic/social activist. Ms. St. Lewis, an Assistant Professor of Law and the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section, is currently working on her LL.M on racial equality in Canadian law schools at the McGill Faculty of Law. Ms. St. Lewis

said that she always knew she wanted to use her law degree to contribute to the community. She stated that although many people would be happy staying in one of the places that she has worked, she is driven to move on each time and to follow the path that her commitment takes her. This path includes positions with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ontario Race Relations Directorate. as well as with the Grand Chief of the Crees of Quebec. Ms. St. Lewis also worked as the Executive Director of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), and designed an education equity program at the University of Ottawa. St. Lewis explained that those students interested in community activism should look for a mentor to guide their careers.

Each panelist reminded us, in his or her own way, that although the choices made today guide tomorrow's opportunity -- they do not define it. A legal education creates endless opportunities including the chance to start a small business, work for a large one, travel, or even change the world.

#### Amee Sandhu, LLB I

'Whither Goest the Practice of Law' was the title of the fourth and final panel of Placement Day, last Thursday, January 11 1996. While the title may have seemed to make a larger claim that it could live up to, it is a question that has many possible answers. Essentially all of the panellists agree that law has become more of a business than a profession.

The main speaker, Roy Heenan of Heenan Blaikie, discussed the formulaic malaise that firms and lawyers are suffering from. The emphasis on billable hours discourages lawyers from other pursuits, such as teaching and research. Heenan argues that so long as outside activities are related to the practice of law, they are beneficial and should be encouraged. The billing practice also forces lawyers to make tough choices about their extracurricular activities. Heenan's advice for the shortterm is to check out the corporate culture of firms that you are considering. Friendliness and congeniality are not too much to expect from a legal workplace. Flexibility and a climate that understands that there are other things in lawyers' lives outside of the office is what all firms should aim for.

Sharon Geraghty agreed with Heenan regarding the importance of the culture of the firm.

### Whither Goest...

She is happy being a partner at Tory Tory DesLauriers & Binnington. She loves her work because of the variety of projects that she works on, and more generally, because she is paid to think. As exciting as her job is, however, she recognizes that the long hours and the demanding clients are disadvantages. One of the ways that Geraghty tries to combat these two drawbacks is that she only does what she wants/has to do in her private life. One of the advantages, and perhaps requirements, of successful practice is that you can hire house-cleaners and nannies. While Geraghty is lucky that her job is stimulating enough to make up for the evenings and weekends of work, some lawyers have not found this to be so.

One of these is Christianne Brizard. Brizard left the big corporate world to start up a boutique firm with a friend. Despite the fact that the work and income is not as guaranteed as in a big firm, Brizard prefers this climate as it allows more time to be spend with one's family, more control over one's work environment, and ultimately, more control over one's life.

Francois Ramsay totally opted out of the firm mentality is now in-house council at

Videotron. He was in total agreement with Heenan about the problems with billable hours being the only thing that a firm wants lawyers. Ramsay was the most vociferous in his criticisms of how corporate firms treat lawyers. He spoke of the social costs of making work the only focus of your life. It is easy to ask for more and more work in a firm, as there is never a shortage of work, but just as Heenan spoke of the importance of the firm's culture, Ramsay spoke of our responsibilities to ourselves to try and achieve a balance between our social lives and our careers. He is off the big corporate track, has been an active member of the Montreal, Quebec and Canadian Bar Associations for years and is much happier now.

The panellists had no definite answers as to where law is going. But as they listened attentively to one another, it became clear that change is desired by lawyers in all different stages of their careers, and those who are not satisfied are willing to make the change themselves. Lawyers have the ability and responsibility to make changes in their work environments, or to seek out jobs, new adventures, and to go where no lawyers have gone before.

There's something lacking in our legal education when only three people out of a class of 30 know that Elvis' birthday was January 8th (it's also the percentage of people in my criminal procedure final that got the Stinchcombe issue, but I digress). By the time I graduate from this fine academic institution, I will have spent four years, several tens of thousands of dollars and countless hours listening to professors drone on about their experiences clerking for, or arguing in front of, the Supreme Court. Despite the fact that I will have spent nearly half a decade, as well as most of what remains of my innocence, obtaining a degree, I will still be unable to practice my chosen profession.

I'm not talking now necessarily of "bar school" (though there is much to criticize in that institution as well), but articling. Even students in the US (which has no articling) attend a form of bar school. The main difference is that theirs is privately run (allowing for market competition), while the respective Canadian bars retain a monopoly on bar school. However, it is not the monopoly on bar school that is the most onerous aspect of the respective Law Societies' monopoly on the licensing of lawyers. The most onerous provision is the requirement that every student spend up to a year articling, before they can practice law.

The origins of articling date back to the days of guilds, when students learned their craft by apprenticing to masters. However, it's been quite a while since most people learned their craft from apprenticeship, so why hasn't law caught up with the times? (considering the fashion sense of some of the professors in this faculty, it's actually quite remarkable that we've made it this far.) I do not think that the notion of learning from someone with experience is necessarily outmoded. Personally, I would not want to start a solo practice straight out of law school. To me that would be the quickest way to starve. In addition to not having a client base, there are all sorts of overhead costs that I

would be ill equipped to incur. Furthermore, I am of the firm belief that we graduate from law school knowing quite a bit about the theory of law, and almost nothing about the practice of it. Rather, it is the ritualized format of articling, and the way in which unscrupulous firms take advantage of students that I detest.

Gone are the times when you could start at a firm as an articling student, and end up as a senior partner. These days when you are hired to article there is at best a 50% chance that you will be asked back after your first year. This is provided that you can find an articling job in the first place. As law firms are increasingly faced with the necessity to cut costs, they have reduced the number of articling students that they take on. If you are one of the fortunate students to get an articling job you can look forward to years of long hours and nerves frayed by the prospect of not being hired back.

One of the solutions to this problem, proposed by the Law Society of Upper Canada, is to have firms take on an extra, unpaid articling student. With all due respect, this would be tantamount to giving the addicts the key to the drug locker. This proposal allows many law firms to believe they are doing the students a favor by hiring them, otherwise they couldn't practice. Perhaps the students are also doing the law firms a favor. What other profession has a built in source of cheap labor to do research, file motions and any other jobs that would otherwise waste a real lawyer's time? Under this system, students without articling positions would be forced to work for free or for substandard wages. This in turn, would drive all student salaries lower. Unpaid articling is grossly unfair to law students who have incurred significant debt to finance their education.

Many students have incurred several tens of thousands of dollars in loans to finance their education. Most did so under the assumption that they would earn enough money upon graduation to pay back their loans. Now no one guaranteed that students would earn thousands of dollars when they graduate. On the other hand, under the current system, students aren't even afforded the opportunity of trying.

What is the solution then? As I stated before, the concept of giving law students practical training is a good one. However, having them do it for free in order to fill the coffers of law firms is not the way to go about doing it. A few solutions present themselves. The first is the elimination of articling altogether. This would allow students to choose whether or not they want to work for a The second firm in the first place. solution would require students to do an internship with a firm while they attend law school. This would allow students the opportunity to gain practical experience while still qualifying for financial aid. The final solution is slightly more radical in nature. Law students could be required to volunteer at a legal clinic during their final year at law school. As part of the clinical experience, students could be given the opportunity to represent clients in provincial courts. This would serve the dual function of supplementing the Province's limited legal aid resources, as well as training the students in the practical application of law. However, require this would also modifications in the current legal training. Firms which used to make money off articling students will have to provide supervision for these students in legal clinics. Second, law faculties may actually have to start teaching students something practical during their three years in school.

Jody Berkes is a fourth year law student who advises everyone to strap on that mattress and get ready for articling interviews. The race goes not to the swiftest, but he who can kiss the most ass. Remember if you can't make it in the real world, you can always come back and teach at The Faculty. Res Ipsa Loquitur.

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# The Mechanics of the Job Application Process

Kathy Jepson (Nat. IV) Member, Placement Committee

#### 1. USING THE PLACEMENT OFFICE

Everybody hates thinking about jobs. The very mention of the subject can make a perfectly normal student tremble with fear. This fear is justifiable: the market for lawyers has certainly been better. But it is important to realize that you can increase the likelihood of success in your job hunt through careful planning and research. In this, the Faculty of Law Placement Office can be of assistance. The office is located in the hallway to the left of the Office of Undergraduate Studies (OUS). It is both a resource centre with various brochures and reference materials, and a series of notice boards with current postings.

A handout (which is printed in this Quid) detailing law employment deadlines is available in the office. If they have run out ask Heather at the OUS to print out some more. Each year, the Law Faculty sends out a questionnaire to legal employers asking for information on summer and articling positions. Completed questionnaires from private law firms are organized in the office geographically into binders for each region. Information on federal and provincial governments, clerkships, bar admission courses and international opportunities is also organized into individual binders.

On the door of the Placement Office is a list of the most useful placement reference materials (and their call numbers) available on reserve in the library. Also important to note, on the left wall of the office is a red pouch containing pamphlets on how to use Quicklaw to access the National Articling Database.

#### 2. CREATING A MAILING LIST

#### ARTICLING/STAGE:

It is VERY, VERY important to apply widely. Go to the OUS and obtain your cumulative class ranking. If you are not in the top quarter of your class (unless you have excellent job experience or good connections), it is suggested that you apply the following criterion when considering a particular firm or government agency. Ask yourself whether you would accept an articling position with the firm if their offer were the only offer you were to receive. If your answer is yes, you should apply. Later, if you find that you are inundated with offers for an interview (or offers of employment), at that point you can become more selective. Possibly the most common error made in the application process is "filtering out" firms prematurely.

In addition, although you may prefer to work in a given city, consider applying to firms in other centres to improve your chances. Each region has its own timetable for applications, interviews and offers.

After deciding that you wish to target a particular centre (ie: Toronto, Montreal, etc.), the next step is to make a list of firms to apply to in that city. Each firm on your list should be recorded with a contact name, address, telephone number (so that if you have questions you can call them later), # of lawyers, # of positions to be filled, and a few words to describe the type of law they practice (so you can tailor your resume to the firm).

How do you find the information for this list? Consult the following resources, adding as you go from book to book new firms you have not heard of, and details of firms you already have listed:

- 1. Placement Office Binder for your region A good place to start, giving general data on firms.
- 2. Careers Day Handbook Helpful for what the firm does and for contact names and addresses.
- 3. Quicklaw (National Articling Database)- A very comprehensive resource for larger firms. For how to use, see the pamphlet in the placement office. Be sure to check not only this year's database (db na96), but also previous years (db na95 etc) since often medium and smaller firms will not list every year, although they still have positions. [Note: Quicklaw does not list most Quebec firms, so for Montreal firms do not rely on the NAD. Instead, look at the <u>Bottin des Employeurs</u>, on reserve in the library.]
- 4. The Canadian Legal Directory Published by Carswell, this is the best resource for completing your list. It is on three hour reserve in the library, call #012 for the 1995 version. Go through your region adding to your list all firms of over 10 people that you have not yet heard of (this is somewhat arbitrary, but firms of under ten people most likely will not have a position). Spend some time and telephone these smaller firms, asking whether they have an articling position, the deadline for applying and what type of law they practice.
- 5. Government and Corporate Offices Don't forget to apply to the federal, provincial and municipal government offices in your target city, as well as in-house counsel positions. Data on these will be found in all four of the resources listed above.

#### SUMMER JOBS:

Most Toronto firms use summer positions as an incentive to encourage students to article with them. Consequently, few are interested in hiring students unless they have completed their next-to-last year of law school. Only in exceptional circumstances are firms interested in hiring students after their first year. This year, the deadline for applications is January 26th.

In Montreal, the deadline for both stagiaire and summer applications is February 28th. Unlike Toronto, Montreal firms will often hire a student not in the next-to-last year of law school as a stagiaire, and this can include an offer of summer employment.

The fact is, however, that the majority of first and second year students rely on research positions within the faculty, summer jobs with the federal or provincial governments, or other arrangements. Some suggestions for summer jobs worth pursuing may include legal reporting services,

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translation services, legal clinics and sole practitioners. Advertisements for legally related positions in Montreal usually arise in late April and May and are posted on the Placement Office notice boards at that time.

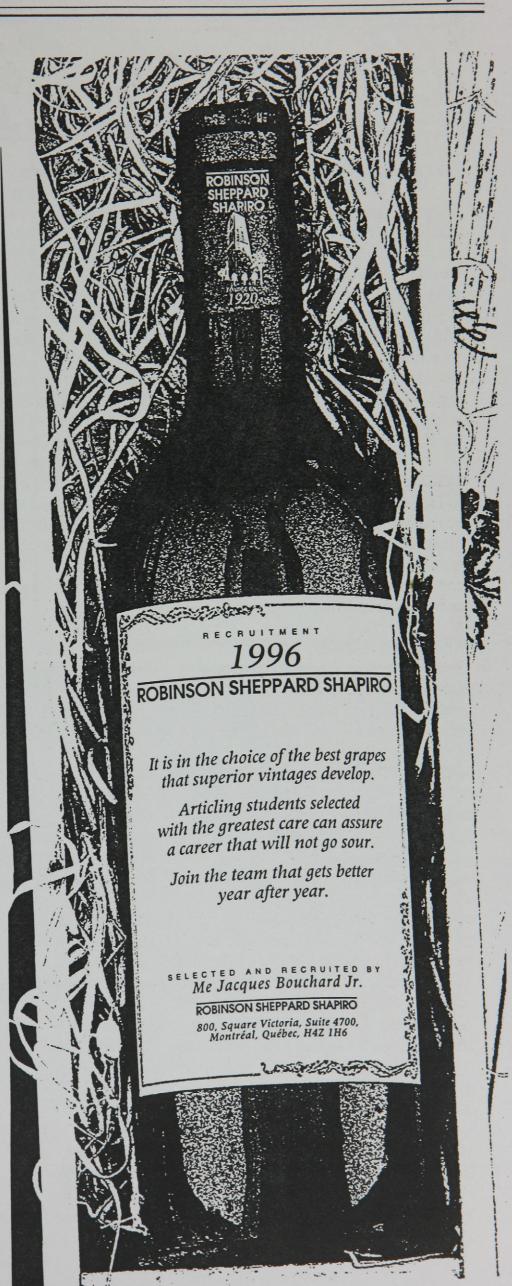
#### 3. PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR APPLICATION PACKAGE

On reserve in the law library are several useful resources on cover letter and resume writing. Consult Towler's <u>Articling in Canada</u>: A <u>Survival Guide</u> (call # 009), Osgoode Hall's <u>Guide to Articling and Summer Positions in Canada</u> (call #002), and last year's <u>Law Link Handbook</u> (call #014). The large envelope that you send to each firm, government office or corporation should include:

- (a) A COVER LETTER Maximum: one page long. See the aforementioned books for examples.
- (b) A RESUME Two pages maximum, laser printed, on white or beige paper. If you are in the top third of your class, you should draw attention to your class ranking. Do not include letters of reference in your package unless you are applying for a clerkship position or the firm or office requests them. Instead, under the heading "References", list two or three references with a name, title and telephone number.
- (c) MARKS Include undergraduate, graduate and law school marks. Only applications for clerkships require original copies of your transcript. A legible photocopy is sufficient for almost all other purposes. I understand that marks from this year's fall term should be available on MARS on the 19th of this month. For those who are applying to Toronto for summer jobs (applications must be received by January 26th), you have the choice of either (1) ordering your transcript from the James Administration Building as soon as it is available and then sending it in your application packages by courier, or (2) you can send your application packages earlier without the Fall 1995 marks (it will be accepted), but you must make sure that you send the marks promptly by regular mail when they come out since your application probably will not be fully assessed until they arrive.

#### 4. IN GENERAL

The Placement Office is a resource centre and not a placement service, so the onus is on the student to do the necessary research. Student volunteers are on occasion available in person to help with general questions. On the door of the office is a list of upper year students who have indicated that they are willing to answer particular questions concerning a topic of law or specific region. While you must put in the work to do your own core research, don't be afraid to ask questions of any third or fourth year student you know. They have been through the process and are usually happy enough to share their knowledge. Best of Luck!



# Choosing the Size of Your Firm

#### Lara Speirs, BCL III

Once you decide that you would like to article at a law firm, it is important to consider the size of firm in which you would like to work. Remember that while there are certain general characteristics that may be common to many firms of the same size, each firm tends to have its own personality, determined by the values and attitudes of the individual lawyers, so it is generally not wise to categorize firms solely by size. Nonetheless, here are some general guidelines...

#### 1) Small firms

#### a) Benefits:

Hands-on Experience:

Small firms may offer more hands-on experience, giving increased client contact and greater responsibility for the management of a file.

#### Administrative Duties:

Small firms may also offer more room for individuality and may provide more exposure to the practical and administrative aspects of practising law, which could be invaluable to students thinking of one day opening their own firm. At a small firm you often see how a firm runs as a business; you are likely to gain experience with billing, collecting, seeking clients, writing to clients, and creating retainers.

#### Working Environment is Key:

Small firms have more pronounced working environments. Some small firms can be just as conservative as the largest ones, while others are distinctly laid-back and progressive. There are feminist law firms, gay law firms, law firms dominated by one ethnic group and law firms dominated by one unbearable megalomaniac!! Make sure you thoroughly investigate the firm to determine which type of firm would best suit your interests and personality.

#### b) Drawbacks: Administrative Duties:

Unlike large firms that have extensive support staff, clerks, messengers and librarians who are responsible for doing all the mechanics of law, in a small firm, it is often the lawyer herself/himself who has such responsibilities. Thus, some of the "hands-on" experience can mean standing in long lines at the registry office and filing documents.

#### Benefits and Hire-back:

Salary and benefits are often significantly less than that of the larger firms. For example, very few small firms pay for your tuition to the bar admission course. Statistics indicate that as an articling student, you are less likely to be hired back at a small firm than you are at a larger firm. Small firms have been the hardest hit by our current unstable economic situation.

#### 2) "Boutique" Firms:

"Boutique Firms" are smaller firms that specialize primarily in one area of the law, such as family law. If you know exactly what you would like to specialize in, it can be highly rewarding to article at a "boutique" firm. However, keep in mind that if you article in a "boutique" firm, you are severely limiting your exposure to other areas of the law. Although "boutique firms" often have the same type of benefits/drawbacks of small firms, they are sometimes located within larger firms, permitting you to take advantage of the large firm's resources and breadth of practice.

#### 3) Medium-sized firms:

"Medium" is defined in relation to the size of other firms in your city: in Toronto, a mid-size firm may have 80 lawyers, while in Montreal that would be considered to be a large law firm. Medium-sized firms offer a solid client base and a fairly conservative atmosphere. The training they offer tends to be less formal than that offered in larger firms, yet more formal than in smaller ones. However, it is difficult to make generalizations about medium-

sized firms. There are just as many medium-sized firms that have large firm characteristics as small firm characteristics.

#### 4) Large firms:

For many students, working at a large firm on Bay Street, Wall Street, West Georgia Street or in Place Ville-Marie has many seductive attributes: salaries are high, benefits are extensive, and the lifestyle is glamorous, high powered and fast-paced. However, these attractive attributes can come at a high cost. Working at a large firm is not for everyone.

#### a) Benefits:

Well Structured Student Programs:

Large firms may offer less client contact and less experience in the administrative aspects of the legal profession, but often have well-structured articling programs and extensive office facilities. Student programs are often well organized. Students rotate through clearly defined departments. Therefore, they allow for exposure to several areas of the law, and to a wide variety of styles of practice. Further, there are often seminars on skills not taught at law school, rotations with large clients, and one-on-one mentorship.

#### High Salary and Benefits:

In addition to a high salary, the standard benefit package is four weeks paid vacation, a contribution towards a health club membership, health and dental insurance, and tuition for the bar admission course. Most firms even pay you while you attend bar school!

#### Socializing and Peer Support:

Large firms generally have a high number of articling students, which may be attractive to those who enjoy sharing concerns and insights with their peers.

NOTE: Although there are some exceptions, it is usually easier to more from a prominent, large law firm to a

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smaller one than it is to move in the other direction.

#### b) Drawbacks:

Large firms tend to have a more conservative culture than smaller ones, and are concerned with preserving and projecting the image of the firm. Women may get dirty looks for wearing pantsuits and men for having long hair! Further, large firms tend to work their students very hard. The salary is not quite as high when you calculate it as an hourly wage! Although you may enjoy a variety of work, the variety means that you will not delve into any one area very deeply!

For further information on the articling process, as most of you already know, A Rite of Passage: Articling Handbook 1996 (Second Edition) is being sold for 5\$ and is available in both French and English. Although I have already sold most handbooks, I can always reprint more! To purchase this articling handbook contact myself, Melanie De Souza, Jen Good, Lisa Miller, Alex Johnston, Myriam Bohémier or Niru Kumar. Further, copies are being sold at Sadie's.

Finally, REMEMBER there are two important deadlines coming up for summer job applications. January 26 is the deadline for Toronto firms that take part in the Matching Program. February 28 is the deadline for Montréal firms that take part in L'Entente.

Happy Job Hunting!

### KUGLER KANDESTIN

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### ing Aloud About Recruiti

#### E. Marian Tremblay, Nat IV

I am glad that I have found an articling position. Exciting at first, the interviews soon become repetitive almost painful. I think the most painful exercise is to spend 1 1/2 month wearing a suit and going up and down the hill between classes. Keeping a suit in the locker and changing before and after every single interview is not such a bad idea. After all, you avoid being ask endless questions by classmates: "Hey, looking sharp! You have an interview? Where is it? First or second round? How was it? How did it go? What did they ask you? Did Firm A call you for second?" Although a worthwhile exercise, going through interviews in Toronto as a practice for Montreal probably made me more cynical of the whole process than other people. At least I was made aware of the different approach in each province and am able to usefully compare them.

Once again, students are just about to embark upon the laborious and at times stressful Montreal recruitment process. Even my imaginary friend, the straight A's student questions his/her chance of getting interviews and an articling position. There is no guarantee. After all my discussions with lawyers in this province, I realize that there has been some major improvements in the recruitment process over the last decade, in large part due to the Entente de Recrutement. Thanks to the Entente, interviews are taking place during a specific period of time and offers are made during a particular week. The most significant advantage for students is probably that they are not forced to give an answer on the spot since they have a few days to consider the best offers. However, the process remains unsatisfactory to both students and employers. Perhaps few people know that a letter circulated between law firms last year expressing strong dissatisfaction with the current situation. Nevertheless, they still serve us the same old Entente year after year with a few minor changes. Unfortunately, some of McGill most faithful supporters are negatively affected by the current system and still object to it by refusing to sign. I wonder why the firms are unwilling to change the process, why the process has to drag on for so long, why there are so few people to question these things and

most importantly, why there is nobody to answer my questions and hear my comments in the first place? Perhaps it is time to have an organization to regulate and coordinate the process and be accountable for it.

After reflecting on the subject, I respect the decision of the LSA Council to adopt a motion last semester endorsing the letter of the CADED to sanction firms who signed but do not respect the Entente. However, I still personally disagree with that motion. The sanction consists of boycotting of violators at our annual Careers Day the following year. I think people misunderstood the real impact of the sanction. It was said that the sanction was toothless. That is true because the situation of having a firm caught and having the LSA and all the other faculties of law in Quebec condemning such a firm is unlikely or virtually impossible. In our solidarity lies our strength. Careers Day is important but does not have much of an impact on the number of applicants. I believe, in retrospect, that motion was self defeating. The motion provided that any decision taken by CADED to sanction a firm must be unanimous but the LSA must endorse the proposition by a 2/3 majority (in case we don't see a clear case of violation or for some other ill-defined reasons). What must be understood is that our association has reserved itself the right to assess the situation and act as a court in this matter so as to opt out of any "Shot in the Foot" scenario (i.e. when the firm that violated the Entente happens to be a generous benefactor of our faculty in which case we would use our judicial discretion and close our eyes to the infraction). It is hard to believe that we fooled ourselves in thinking that our rights and interests are protected and that we make a statement and show our teeth by waving a letter which pretends to sanction the unlikely possibiliy of having a firm caught violating the Entente. If our intention is to support the Entente, let's demonstrate it clearly. Otherwise, we don't need such a short term feel good measure. Wait. I should not be so harsh on us. We have a valid justification for taking such measure: there is no other body to enforce the Entente. Indeed, who is there to take complain and who is there to complain in the first place? Nobody. It proves that it is neither the role of students nor that of CADED to act as enforcement

agency for the Entente. Hence, there is a need for an autonomous body to fill this role.

In Toronto (and similarly in Calgary and Vancouver and many cities in the US), they have at least the Law Society of Upper Canada and the National Matching System which share the role of informing students, setting the recruitment rules and regulations, enforcing them as an independent body and matching students with firms that offer articling positions. I think it is essential to have an organization performing the role of an informative body. On one hand, students need a place to call to have their questions answered and more specifically, they would need to know which firms still have positions to offer. Students who didn't find a stage are worried and until they find one and they must have an organization to guide them and help them find the openings. On the other hand, firms have to rely on an independant body already mandated with the power to judge and sanction. Such an impartial body must be present to see whether a violation of the spirit or of the word of an "entente" was committed and sanction them in case of such violation. We have all heard and perhaps witnessed firms making offers, taking students for coffee, for cocktail or for lunch before offers are supposed to be formally made. Does that enticement, inducement consitute shmoozing in good faith? The enforcement can't be artbitrary. We need a strict and objective organization.

Furthermore, Toronto has an interview process which only takes place during a single week so that students don't have to jeopardize their whole semester in search of a job. I am inclined to conclude that there is place for improvement in our system especially in light of the dissatisfaction expressed by numerous Montreal law firms to the extent of making them withdraw totally from any participation in the Entente. The system in Toronto has its weaknesses and as such I concede the fact that their computer matching system takes away part of the human element to recruiting which I find essential. If we could somehow combine the advantages of both systems.... Actually, if we had an organization which could inform, regulate and enforce, we would have all the advantages without the

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disadvantages. Perhaps that with such an independant body making the rules, we would simply have to appeal to their common sense to have them reconsider making students wear suits for 1 1/2 month. They would understand that while their client files are important, perhaps holding interviews in blitz over a period of two weeks is sufficient and beyond that is not within the realm of reasonableness. Students from our faculty can at least be thankful they are not at Université de Montréal in which case they would have to come downtown from the other side of Mount Royal.

It seems to me that the Barreau du Québec is not being too helpful. Apparently, it is unwilling to take the role of its counterpart in Ontario, the Law Society of Upper Canada, in assisting students in the recruitment process. To me, this whole situation is consistent with a notion which seems to prevail in the Quebec law profession and at the Barreau that Quebec law students are students and not future colleagues, whereas in Ontario, it is the opposite: law students are considered future lawyers and respected as such.

Upon leaving this faculty, I am pleased to notice that the administration has demonstrated much preoccupation with the placement of its students lately. First, they appointed a full time Assistant Dean of Admissions, Placement and Alumni Relations. Second, they submitted the Faculty Planning Report [available at the LSA] intitled: The Future of McGill's Faculty of Law; A Statement of Challenges and Aspirations, which includes the reflexions of the administration on the issue of placement. In the document, they recognized that the operation of the faculty over the last few years had focused largely upon helping students to find jobs in major law firms in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, that more emphasis could be placed on less obvious career tracks that are harder for students to find for themselves (e.g. teaching), that we need to pay more attention to graduates from our LL.M or doctoral degree programmes and also to international career opportunities. The report went further is stating that: "Compared to U.S. facilities, only minimal resources have been devoted to placement, and this has generated some sense of disaffection amongst students who believe that "the Faculty doesn't care what happens to us after graduation". Although nothing could be further from the truth, we have not always indicated our interest in concrete ways [...]" I also learnt from the report that they keep important issues like A.B.A. accreditation in mind in the construction of the new Law Library. In the meantime, we will have to proceed with a restructuring of our placement operations to make it more efficient. Thanks to the dedication of the volunteers at the Placement Office who have already started the process. In the end, students will also have to do their share and be more alert to the many opportunities that are offered to them but which sometimes remain unknown because only a few students regularly check the placement board where all these positions are offered.

Finally, the initiative of a Placement Day was excellent and hopefully more students will attent next year. I was only concerned to see so few lower year students attending the panels. Perhaps I should suggest to change the names of Careers Day and Placement Day because students might be confused. Based on the function that they serve, perhaps their names should be reversed.

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